4/11/72

Bud and Jim (less so Larry),

As you read Frank's book, there are several things I would, from my limit[ed] reading, strongly encourage you to think about and look for. Aside from an initial skip[ping] around from the index, which opened my eyes (I was preparing for the Jerry Williams show), I have reached page 65 only. I think that before goin[g] further in his book you should read the Publishers' Weekly interview with him and Martin Waldron's story, publish[ed] right after the minitrial, and have several points independently in mind: that he is a knowing, deliberate liar (and please ask why); that he began with a preconception (and consider seriously why that particular preconception in its fullest import and what interests it could serve), when and why he abandoned it (and on this reach your own conclusion, not what he now says).

With the publishing history all previous books had, all failures, ask yourself why Frank went ahead and why Doubleday didn't drop the project, coupling this with the inordinate, multiple book-club pre-selection with the history on this subject.

Be alert to error, as best you can detect it. Minor error permeates the little that to this point can be said to relate to the assassination. Be alert to manufactures, things he made up for literary purposes, and ask yourself in each case if they are for no more than literary purposes (such as Ray's alleged return from getting the binoculars). Do not, please, let yourself be diverted by the smooth flow and the seeming reasonableness of what is essentially a novel, despite his contrary protests. This is a very skillful job. Try to time the writing of each part.

I think that with luck and a few facilities, he may well have provided us the intellectual judo we need (and I can't ignore the remarkable coincidence of Stoner's raising his forked tongue at this very moment, although the chances are that it is no more than coincidence).

Certain definite ideas are forming in my mind. I think it important that my opinions not influence yours in advance, for we must be careful. After we have all read it (and Larry, Bob gave me his copy, so if you don't borrow one first, when Doubleday sends me the promised and long-delayed copy, you can have it), then there will be time for discussion of what I now believe possible. I am aware that when I finish the book my notions may change, modify or be wrong.

As of now I think it gives you some rather promising legal approaches. I encourage everyone to tape or have someone tape every appearance he makes of which we know. He will be in NO Friday, Bob today me (I suspect for Panorama, which declined me even when a v.p. urged it). When he is there he may well do other shows. I'd phone Avco and ask for a tape if they air him and say you are asking for it as Ray's counsel. He'll be in Calif. by the end of the month, for he is due in S.F. 5/1. I expect he may be in L.A. before then, and you should be able to get all he does there taped easily enough. Alert your members and without secrecy. Ask them to ask all the stations in their areas which could air him, and let them say they want to tape it. He is vulnerable, he is terrified, and he knows he has done wrong. He is also a remarkable egotistical man, I think. We know about the St.L area 5/7. Maybe Larry can have someone cover Chicago. He lets little things drop because of his special kind of ego, and I have already spotted a couple. After he has made his circuit, after we have been able to go over whatever we can get of what he says, I think you may see the possibility of some new legal moves. Despite the careful stroking, I want nothing to be done, on wide expression of interest, until after I confront him in St. L, if he shows, and anywhere else, live or by phone, of which one is pending...One clue: despite the title and subtitle and blurbs, this is not a book on the assassination. Ask if it is not merely a formular commercial thing, what its purposes might be, and for whose interest. As I have indicated earlier, I think Ray has legitimate actions against a fairly large number of people and you may want to try to depose that skilled filibusterer Frank. M